



N<sup>OS</sup>. III. & IV. NEW SERIES.]

[JULY & AUGUST 1848.]

# THE COLONIAL INTELLIGENCER;

OR,

## ABORIGINES' FRIEND.



VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED FOR THE ABORIGINES'  
PROTECTION SOCIETY;

AND SOLD BY

J. OLLIVIER, 59 PALL MALL; C. GILPIN, 5 BISHOPSGATE WITHOUT;  
AND MESSRS. WARD, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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## THE RED-RIVER SETTLEMENT, AND THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY.

We have, in former numbers of the "COLONIAL INTELLIGENCER," from time to time adverted to the proceedings of the Delegation, which was appointed by the Native-Indians and Half-breeds settled at Red-River, to bring under the notice of the Government certain grievances alleged by them against the Hudson's-Bay Company; and we now shall lay before our Readers the result of these proceedings, as far as, up to the present moment, these have been attended with success.

The Memorial to the Queen, drawn up by the Settlers, was in due form presented to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Grey, who held out a promise that the charges therein alleged should be inquired into, and thereupon a communication appears to have ensued between the Colonial Office and the Directors of the Hudson's-Bay Company. In answer to the charges aforesaid, the Company sent in a counter-statement, which was refuted by the Delegation from Red-River, and additional evidence adduced in support of the original impeachment of the Company's proceedings. It would seem, however, that Lord Grey paid no attention to this latter document, except in holding out a promise that a Commission of Inquiry, on the spot, should be issued, under the auspices of Lord Elgin, Governor of Canada, and that due attention would be paid to the petition of the Red-River Indians; a reply which, though vague and unsatisfactory, the representative of the Delegation (Mr. J. K. Isbister) was obliged to receive, and await the result.

By referring to our earliest Numbers, in which the Memorial in question was printed, our Readers will find a list of the grievances which the Red-River Indians brought against the Company: to these we shall have occasion to advert more particularly; but, before we do so, must state that the Hudson's-Bay Company, renewing its activity, and setting in motion all the machinery which, through its wealth and influence, it enjoys, exercised these in endeavouring to thwart the efforts of the persons who were advocating the cause of the Indians against a power both despotic and cruel; and the Colonial Minister only too readily seconded these efforts.

The fact transpired that Lord Grey had secretly, that is, without the consent of Parliament, made to the Hudson's-Bay Company a grant of Vancouver's Island, for the ostensible purpose of colonizing it. Now it was known to the Red-River Delegation that the Company had very recently applied for such a grant, and, in consequence, a representation was made to Lord Grey, pointing out the disadvantage and the impolicy of extending the Company's powers, at least until they had cleared themselves from the charges alleged against them. Lord Grey replied, through Mr. Hawes, that no such grant would be conferred upon the Hudson's-Bay Company, until a reply had been received from Lord Elgin, together with the Report of the Local Commission of Inquiry; but, in spite of this assertion, the

grant was made, and to the remonstrances of the Delegation the only reply that could be obtained was, that the Hudson's-Bay Company had satisfactorily met the charges which the Red-River Indians had brought against them.

With the question of the grant of Vancouver's Island, impolitic and unwise in the extreme, and marked by indecent precipitancy, we have some little to do in these pages, inasmuch as there are on the island some few Natives who are likely to meet with the fate of their fellows at Red-River, as they will be placed under the same despotic government; thus, as an aboriginal question, this matter is within our province.

Under the circumstances already mentioned, the Red-River Delegation had no alternative left but to bring the whole subject under the notice of Parliament. Accordingly, on the 18th inst., Mr. Christy (Newcastle-under-Lyne) rose, upon the order of the day being read for the House to go into Committee of Supply, and, in pursuance of previous notice, called the attention of the House to the proposed grant of Vancouver's Island to the Hudson's-Bay Company; and after condemning it upon public grounds, as well as upon the fact of grievous charges against the Company having been alleged by the Red-River Indians and Settlers—charges yet unrefuted—demanded that the confirmation of the grant should be delayed until these charges had been properly investigated, and that Parliament had enjoyed due opportunity of acquiring information, and of expressing its opinion upon the subject.

Mr. HAWES, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, defended the grant upon the grounds of expediency, considering that on account of the great value of the island it ought to be occupied and colonized forthwith, and this could not be better or more effectually accomplished than by the Hudson's-Bay Company. With reference to the charges which had been brought against the Company, they proceeded from a resident who was dissatisfied with that administration; yet these charges, and the Company's defence, had been carefully considered, and Lord Grey had come to the conclusion, that although the Company had satisfactorily met them, looking at all that had been disclosed in those charges and in the defence, his Lordship thought the subject deserving of further investigation, and the Governor of Canada had been directed to institute an inquiry on the spot. But after all, what were these charges? They were made by an individual; were imperfectly sustained by evidence entitled to weight; were answered completely by the Governor of the Hudson's-Bay Company, and still more by documents easy of access. It was asserted, however, that until the result of the local inquiry were known, the grant should be delayed; but much time must elapse before the complaints alleged against the Company could be inquired into upon the spot; and, considering the importance of Vancouver's Island as a settlement, it was deemed desirable not to leave it unoccupied pending such inquiries. Now, Lord Elgin, Governor-General

ral of Canada, referring to the complaints relating to the Red-River Colony, which was situated hundreds of miles from Vancouver's Island, states that the result of his inquiries up to that moment proved highly favourable to the Company, whose jurisdiction over the Red-River Indians was very advantageous to them. His Lordship stated, upon the authority of Colonel Crofton, who had resided some considerable time at Red-River, in command of a detachment of troops, that one main principle observed by the Company in their administration of the affairs of the Colony, was the prohibition of a trade in ardent spirits; and that although the progress of the Indians towards civilization might not have been so rapid as to correspond with the expectations of some of those who were interested in their welfare, similar disappointments were experienced elsewhere than within the limits of the Company's territories; whilst persons to whom the trading privileges of the Company were obnoxious ascribed to their rule the existence of evils which it was altogether out of their power to remedy. If the trade were thrown open, and the Indians left to the mercy of the adventurers who engaged in it, their condition would be greatly deteriorated. Colonel Crofton's opinion went to shew that the government of the Company was mild and protective, and admirably adapted to the state of society existing in Rupert's Land, where Indians, Half-breeds, and Europeans were happily governed, and lived protected by laws mercifully and impartially administered by the Recorder and Magistrates. This was the substance of Lord Elgin's communication; but the American Government appointed an exploring expedition, which had visited these parts, and reported favourably of the progress of the Red-River Settlement. Mr. Christy had spoken of it as a failure, and said that the Company had not settled or colonized successfully there, besides intimating that a body, whose object was trade and profit in furs, was not a body to whom colonization ought to be trusted. At the Red-River Settlement, with a population of about 5000, there existed four Protestant Churches, nine Protestant Schools attended by 500 scholars, four Roman-Catholic Schools, a Roman-Catholic Bishop, and several Roman-Catholic Priests; wherefore it was evident there had been no backwardness in providing religious instruction. He (Mr. Hawes) considered that the Company had made a good defence against the charges alluded to; still he thought the whole question ought to be further investigated by an impartial party. A gentleman holding the Queen's Commission had been appointed to inquire into them and report thereupon. (Here Mr. Gladstone made some remark across the table.) Yes, technically, no doubt, he was Governor under the Company, but he was an officer in the Queen's army, and a gentleman of his rank would not be likely to conduct the investigation otherwise than fairly and impartially. To appoint a Commission from this country would consume both time and expense. For the satisfaction of parties, and for throwing light upon the condition of that vast and remote district, it seemed desirable to have

further inquiry; but after considering the charges and the evidence in support of them, it had not been thought that they were of such a serious nature as to form a ground on which to refuse the Company the grant of Vancouver's Island. (Hear.)

MR. GLADSTONE (Oxford University) opposed the grant of Vancouver's Island upon public grounds, and considered that, in this matter, Lord Grey had fallen into a serious error: he had, indeed, erred more signally than any person who had been hitherto entrusted with the affairs of the Colonial Department. The Under-Secretary for the Colonies (Mr. Hawes) had endeavoured to make good the character of the Hudson's-Bay Company; to establish that it was necessary speedily to occupy Vancouver's Island; that the Hudson's-Bay Company was the only instrument available for that purpose; and that therefore we ought to avail ourselves of it. If, however, it could be shewn that there existed valid objections to committing this charge to the Hudson's-Bay Company, the House would be justified in calling upon the Government to pause before it completed the arrangement which had been agreed upon. Better act slowly and well than rashly and mischievously. (Hear, hear.)

The right honourable Member then expatiated at some length upon the ultimate importance to which Vancouver's Island was likely to attain, and of the great national interests involved in the present question. He shewed the evil results of entrusting to a monopolizing trading Company the task of colonizing any district, and asserted that there never was an instance in which the evils of monopoly had acquired a ranker development than in the case of the Hudson's-Bay Company, whose monopoly of land and trade was aggravated by absolutism in politics, covered by the cloak of impenetrable secrecy. (Hear, hear.) In the vast British Empire all imperial concerns were made public, and particulars relating to all the Queen's subjects were placed upon the tables of both Houses of Parliament, for the information of their Members. But what did any of those whom he was then addressing know, by means of Parliamentary information, of the Hudson's-Bay Company and the condition of the country, as large as the continent of Europe, which they held under their rule? (Hear, hear.) Absolutely nothing. We knew they had a charter, and a license to trade; but with respect to the Government which they had established, to the power which they exercised, to the sanctions by which they enforced that power, to the condition of the people and the laws by which they were regulated,—with respect to all these points we knew absolutely nothing. (Hear, hear.) The Charter granted to the Hudson's-Bay Company by Charles II., in 1670, conferred enormous powers upon them. In 1690 they applied to Parliament for a Bill to confirm their powers for ever; but the trading interests of England prevailed upon the Legislature to pass a Bill confirming the Company's powers for seven years only. In 1697 another Bill was introduced for continuing the Company's governing powers, which, for some reason not apparent, Parliament re-

fused to pass, and from that moment to this the Company possessed no Parliamentary sanction for their governing powers, and the House of Commons was now as free to question them as if no Act had ever been passed upon the subject. The Company had never ventured to maintain their title in a Court of Law, nor had they occupied more than a portion of the coasts of the territory to which they laid claim, the interior being explored by the French fur-traders. The Company had not dared to go to law with the North-West Company, but had coalesced with them, and then found themselves again at liberty to carry on the same system of absolutism in which they had revelled from the first. There could be no doubt of the invalidity of the Company's original grant, as Mr. Bearcroft, Sir Vicary Gibbs, Sir A. Pigot, Mr. Serjeant Spankie, and Mr. Brougham, were unanimous in their opinion upon this head, and had given it against the Company.

After quoting these opinions, the right honourable Member went on to shew, that as far as the Hudson's-Bay Company was a trading Company, the circumstance was an essential objection to employing them for colonizing purposes. It was of necessity an anti-colonizing Company, and there could not be grosser folly than to commit the foundation and care of an infant settlement to a body which had interests directly at variance with the prosperity of the Colony. (Hear.) What was the object which a fur-trading Company had in view? Could it be their wish that the country in which they carried on their operations should be reclaimed and cultivated? On the contrary, it must be kept like a desert. (Hear, hear.) They must, to be sure, cultivate a few spots in order to obtain corn for the support of their cattle and their agents; but as respected the country at large, their interest required that it should be kept as nature had left it. (Hear, hear.) What was the object of such a Company as regarded the native inhabitants of the country? Was it desirable for them that the benevolent purposes of Christianity should be carried out with respect to the roving Indian Tribes; that they should be weaned from their erratic habits, comfortably clothed, located in fixed habitations; and made tillers of the soil? On the contrary, it was their interest that the Natives should be kept as closely as possible to the barbarous and savage state, because in that condition they were the best hunters. (Hear, hear.) What was the class of men whom the Hudson's-Bay Company employed for the transaction of their affairs? What were the habits of mind in which they were trained? They had been educated under an absolute and unmitigated despotism. The noble Lord at the head of the Government laughed at that; the noble Lord seemed to think that a trifling matter; but it was one of serious moment, and the noble Lord ought to regard it in that light. It was surely no laughing matter that despotic power should have been exercised for centuries by a Company which dared not let the question of their title go into a Court of Law. (Hear, hear.) When the servants of the Company were to be employed as the



agents of colonization, it was important to know the manner in which they had been trained. Now it was notorious that they had been subjected to a state of thralldom as nearly approaching slavery as it was possible to make Englishmen submit to.

The right honourable Member then entered into a detailed account of the Company's system of procuring very young men from the Orkneys, whom they employed at an extremely low annual salary, and contrived always to keep their debtors, so as to leave them no alternative but to remain in the country as vassals. He also exhibited proofs that the Company, as a body of fur-traders, could not be a colonizing Company, as colonization was unfavourable to the development of the fur-trade; a fact upon which the Company themselves had particularly insisted in a Memorial signed by six of the interested parties. No discoveries in the northern regions of America were due to the Company, which had ever striven to repress the spirit of discovery, and to prevent the development of the resources of the country. There were on the coast valuable whale fisheries, and great mineral deposits in the interior, on the east main: these the Company would not work, and refused to allow others to do so. To the south of the Bay there existed ample opportunity for agricultural settlements, but for this the Company had done nothing. The Red-River Settlement had not been founded by the Company, but by the late Lord Selkirk, who had purchased a large portion of the Company's stock at a depreciated rate, and thus acquired a preponderating influence, by the exercise of which he got the Company to sell him 116,000 square miles of what they considered their territory in North America, with all the powers they could grant, and then he founded the Red-River Colony. But did the Company favour that Colony? No. On the contrary, all the independent members of the Company protested against it. Did the North-Western Company favour the Colony? He would not refer to the melancholy and tragical scenes that took place when a large portion of the Settlers of that Colony were cut off in bloody conflict with the Company; but seeing that the attempt to colonize the Red River was in its origin objectionable in every respect to the fur trade, they did not deny that, except in the protection and assistance they considered it their duty to afford to their suffering countrymen, after ascertaining the real object which the plans of Lord Selkirk were intended to cover, they did all in their power to render those schemes abortive, as did now every one who represented the spirit of the two combined Companies. The same interest—that of the fur trade—subsisted in Vancouver's Island; yet the Government were determined to give the colonization of that island to a fur-trading Company. (Hear.) What were the terms upon which that Company held their territory? Had they ever sent out a single independent emigrant? Was there any thing but a population of their own retired servants, who were so much in their debt that they were obliged to remain there in a state of servitude, and could hardly escape from it? There

was no such thing as a free colonist under the Hudson's-Bay Company. The Settlers held their land of the Company at 12s. 6d. an acre, the land being let to them on a 1000 years' lease at a peppercorn rent; but that land was subject to the penalty of forfeiture if the holders of it should not submit to all the exclusive trading privileges of the Company, to all the rules and regulations they should make, and to such taxation as the Company imposed. He did not hesitate to say they virtually surrendered every right and liberty of Englishmen as the condition of holding land under the Company. (Hear, hear.)

After exposing the surreptitious manner in which the Company had acted in order to secure the grant of Vancouver's Island, Mr. Gladstone referred to what he considered a superabundant ground for postponing the same; namely, the charges alleged against the Company. (Hear, hear.) He touched this part of the subject with reluctance, because he was not in possession of all the results of the inquiry into the case; but as far as he was possessed of them, he was sorry to say they produced a very different effect upon his mind from that they had had upon the honourable gentleman's (Mr. Hawes). He had no suspicion of Earl Grey, nor of the honourable gentleman, on this question. About nine months ago the person who brought these charges to England applied to him (Mr. Gladstone), and he said, "If you will place them in the hands of Lord Grey, I am persuaded he will submit them to a sifting investigation." He (Mr. Gladstone) could not say he was satisfied with the investigation that had taken place, or with the appointment of the Governor of the Red River, although an Officer in the British Service, to make a report on the validity or invalidity of those serious charges against the Company. He did not think that that gentleman should have been placed in such a position; to send him there as a servant of the Hudson's-Bay Company, and at the same time to say to him, "You are to investigate all these difficult charges"—difficult on account of there being so little communication—"and make a report on the merits or demerits of your employers." The honourable gentleman (Mr. Hawes) had mis-stated the case. He had asserted that Mr. Isbister was the complainant. Now he (Mr. Gladstone) held in his hand a printed copy of a Memorial signed by five persons who had come home as the representatives of others at the Red-River Settlement; and who were they? The honourable gentleman said that that Settlement contained a population of 5000 persons. He (Mr. Gladstone) understood that out of that number there were 571 Indian and Half-breed families, and that the complainants were almost exclusively Indians and Half-breeds, out of whom 1000 persons had signed the Petition of which Mr. Isbister was the organ; and their allegation was, that these 1000 persons included a large portion of Christian Indians who had been converted by the Missionaries in that country. To say, then, that the Petition was the complaint of Mr. Isbister was a statement as wide of the fact as could be conceived. But he (Mr. Gladstone) need not fall back upon the Petition for grounds of complaint

against the Company: he would refer to charges against them which were published in various works and publications. One statement was, that in 1835 capital punishment had been inflicted by the Company upon an Indian. Had that been investigated? (Mr. Hawes: "It will be.") Then was not this a reason why this matter should be postponed? Was it right or decent to give this colonizing operation to an anti-colonizing Company, who exercised absolute powers which were exempted from the Act of Parliament which did give certain judicial powers, without investigating the truth of that charge?

Here Mr. Hawes asked if it was before trial. It might have been done under the Act of Parliament.

Mr. Gladstone could not say; but the Act of Parliament purported, "That the power of the Court shall not extend to capital offences, nor to civil actions where the amount in issue exceeds 200*l*." He had shewn that capital punishment, it was alleged, had been inflicted, and the honourable gentleman said the charge was now in the hands of Government, and therefore there was no flinching from investigation; but the investigation was not yet made, and yet the Company were to be the objects of this extraordinary grant. The charge of capital punishment without trial was upon the statement of Mr. Simpson, who said—

"Kindness and conciliation in the intercourse of its servants and officers with Indians of every tribe; an absence of interference in the quarrels of individuals, in the internal disputes of tribes, and in the wars which they may wage with one another; and an invariable rule of avenging the murder by Indians of any of its servants, blood for blood, without trial of any kind; are the three and only principles followed out by the Hudson's-Bay Company, in its transactions with the numerous inhabitants of the extensive territory under its controul; and its sole aim is to derive the greatest possible revenue from that territory."

This was a subject of the most serious responsibility. It violated the real equality of right that ought to prevail between man and man, if a Company, through their agents, were able, without investigation, to put a period to the life of a brother; and that was stated, not in a paragraph inculpatory of the Company, but in a paragraph intended to be laudatory of it. And what were they to say, if to those powers was added that of taxation without authority? It was also charged against the Company, that whilst they took great care of the fur-bearing animals, they were quite indifferent as to those upon which the roving Indians subsisted, and there was, in consequence, such a scarcity of food, that cases of starvation were common, and even sometimes the Indians were driven to cannibalism, not from habit, but from necessity. There might be countries of such hopeless poverty, that that might come upon them; but were the wares of the Indians of so little value? for such a contingency was a necessary consequence. Was it not a monstrous hardship we should go into a country inhabited by a people who had the means of bringing us commodities the most valuable in our markets, and say to them, "You

shall deal with us, and with us alone? England is a country of capital and enterprise; but if we allow competition to enter into the field, you will get the true value of your furs;" and then, taking advantage of the difference between the market of the Indian and our markets here, should suffer them to starve? Mr. Robson, in his work published about 1750, said that the Company received 2000 per cent. on the beaver skins they purchased from the Indians; and more modern tariffs proved that the actual profits of barter were enormously in favour of the Company. Was it fair, then, to the Indians, whom Nature and Providence had placed in possession of those wild districts, and who brought us the fruits and products of them, that they should be compelled to deal with one customer without receiving some compensation for it? Ought they not to have some security against the danger of starvation, or being driven to cannibalism? (Hear, hear.) It was a subject for Parliamentary investigation whether the fur trade required a monopoly, and whether the extraordinary powers of the Hudson's-Bay Company ought to be left in their hands. With reference to the statement made by Mr. Isbister, that the importation of ardent spirits into the Company's territories had enormously augmented, it appeared that in 1837 the quantity introduced amounted to 3800 gallons, while in 1845 it reached 900,000 gallons! If this statement were a correct one, it was an ugly fact against the Company, particularly when it should be remembered that this increase took place only the year previously to the renewal of the Company's license being asked for and obtained, and he should like to have this fact inquired into. Mr. Gladstone next enumerated several reasons to shew that the Hudson's-Bay Company's proceedings were based upon the most despotic principles, and that those parties were completely in their power through the privilege which the Company exercised of remitting duties imported into their territories, or of shutting out individual enterprise. To wit, one of the Delegates from Red River (Mr. Sinclair) had received an intimation that no goods would be shipped this year to York Factory in his name: now the House would understand what the effect of that would be, as the only ships allowed to go to the country were those belonging to the Company. He thought, too, that the Company had been extremely neglectful of their duties with regard to the religious instruction of those with whom they came into contact. In 1815, Governor Temple writing home, said that over the whole extent of their territories not a Place of Worship existed. But Mr. Hawes asserted, that since 1815 the Company had done a great deal to wipe away this reproach, inasmuch as now there are nine Places of Worship and four Schools within their territories. Now the House should know that the bulk of what had been done in this respect had been done by the voluntary Societies at home, and not by the Company; and this fact would be established by a reference to the reports of the two principal Missionary Societies. Beside this, the evidence of the Bishop of Montreal shewed that, in 1844 at least, there was not one clergyman of the Church of England on the further

side of the Rocky Mountains, and one only within their limits, namely, at Red River, whilst even he was a stipendiary of the Church Missionary Society.

The right honourable Member then read extracts from a confidential letter written in 1840 by Mr. Thomas Simpson to his brother Alexander, shewing that the Wesleyan Missionaries had likewise found their way into, and established themselves in, the Company's districts. Also an abstract from the letter of Mr. Belcourt (*vide* last Number of the INTELLIGENCER) to prove the opposition of the Company to the attempts made to christianize the Indians.

Another point to which he (Mr. Gladstone) wished to advert was the settlement of the Indians. In 1821 the terms of the Company's license bound them to adopt measures for diminishing and ultimately preventing the sale of intoxicating liquors, and for promoting their moral and religious improvement; but it was not until 1832 that a piece of ground was selected to try an experiment of what might be done for the civilization of the Indians, and this attempt was made by Mr. Cockran, who was sent out by the Church Missionary Society. The Wesleyans also made a similar effort; and this was the only agency that had been employed for that purpose, to carry out which the Hudson's-Bay Company had contributed only a portion of the funds necessary thereto. Having at some length further exhibited the impolicy of granting Vancouver's Island to the Company, and stated the reasons which existed for doing so, at least until the Company had satisfactorily met the charges alleged against it, Mr. Gladstone resumed his seat amidst the loud cheers of the House.

In reply, Mr. C. BULLER (Liskeard) defended the Company, and endeavoured to shew that Government was doing a very wise thing in entrusting the colonization of Vancouver's Island to the Hudson's-Bay Company. He did not, however, touch upon the grievances of the Indians, nor upon the charges alleged against the Company, which he thought had nothing to do with the real question. He considered that Government had been taken by surprise; but he would rather see Government bending its energies to establish in New Zealand, New Holland, and the Cape, Settlements such as those which the Hudson's-Bay Company purposed to found in Vancouver's Island, than frittering away its time in vexatious discussions.

Mr. HUME (Montrose) expressed his astonishment at the statement made, that Government had been taken by surprise; and proved, by reading a correspondence which had taken place between Mr. Hawes and Mr. Christy, that the Colonial Office had enjoyed ample opportunity of meeting the question, but had flagrantly violated its faith with the parties who had taken it up. After enumerating the advantages of Vancouver's Island, and shewing that the Hudson's-Bay Company was not a fit body to be entrusted with so important a trust as that of colonizing it—a task it was, from the peculiar character of its institutions, incompetent to fulfil—the honourable Member moved, “That an humble address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that

Her Majesty will be pleased not to grant a charter to the Hudson's-Bay Company, until further inquiry has been made into the administration by the Company of the Settlement on the Red River, and until the capabilities of Vancouver's Island have been fully ascertained."

Mr. P. HOWARD said that Mr. Buller had not grappled with the arguments of Mr. Gladstone, whose views, and those of the gentlemen who expressed similar sentiments, he (Mr. Howard) thought that Government ought not to be backward in following out.

Mr. HAWES wished to set the House right with respect to the letter on which the charges against the Noble Earl at the head of the Colonial Office had been founded. It had no relation whatever with the subject under discussion, for it merely related to the differences between the Company and the Settlers.

Mr. CHRISTY observed that Government might easily have brought the subject under the consideration of Parliament. A slur had been thrown on the source whence he derived his information, but in this respect he could lay before the House the most satisfactory testimonials. The party in question was the Roman-Catholic Missionary at the Red-River Settlement, and was instrumental in drawing up the Petition which had been alluded to, and had been presented to the Crown. His informant, Mr. Belcourt, had certainly been expelled the Settlement through the opposition and the machinations of the Hudson's-Bay Company, but was shortly after restored to his flock, through the interference of the Society of St. Thomas of Canterbury, at the head of which was the Noble Lord the Member for Arundel.

Mr. WYLD (Bodmin) stated that the Hudson's-Bay Company did all they could to conceal the nature and extent of the productions of Vancouver's Island. In the course of the present discussion, honourable Members had heard much respecting the expense of sending out emigrants thither; but he begged to inform the House that there were many merchants in the city of London quite prepared to take out Settlers there at the rate of 17*l.* each.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL (London) believed that the consequence of postponing till the year after next any proceedings on this subject, as a question between the Hudson's-Bay Company and any other Settlers, might be, that Americans would in the meantime settle in Vancouver's Island, and after the inquiries were completed we should find the island occupied. This, he thought, would be the effect of carrying the amendment of the honourable Member for Montrose. With respect to the charges brought against the Hudson's-Bay Company, they might be founded certainly; but he deemed Lord Elgin's authority to be of weight; and that Nobleman said that the result of his inquiries was highly favourable to the Company, and had left upon his mind the impression that the authority exercised by it over the vast and inhospitable regions under its charge was, on the whole, very advantageous.

Mr. GOULBURN (Cambridge University) thought that the course pursued by Government was an improper one, and calculated neither to conduce to the advantage of this country, nor to promote the prosperity of the proposed Settlement. He would not impute to the Company any evil disposition, but he was anxious that Vancouver's Island should not be left to the mercy of parties without either the capacity or the interest to found a Settlement advantageous to the country, though the time was not far distant when persons would be found ready to form a Colony that should be creditable to the country. He hoped the subject would receive the attention of Government.

After a few observations from Mr. DUNCAN (Dundee) the House divided upon Mr. Hume's motion, which was negatived by a majority of 18.

In the House of Lords, on Thursday the 24th August, LORD MONTEAGLE rose pursuant to notice, and after stating his reasons for asserting that the Hudson's-Bay Company ought not to be entrusted with the colonization of Vancouver's Island, and shewing that within their territories they had not advanced the progress of religion, whilst their conduct to the Indians had been of a most oppressive character, moved for copies of the correspondence between the Government and the Hudson's-Bay Company, and for other papers relating to the grant of Vancouver's Island to that Association.

In reply, EARL GREY defended the policy of the Colonial administration in making the grant of Vancouver's Island to the Hudson's-Bay Company; and, with reference to the charges alleged against it, endeavoured to cast discredit upon the veracity and the motives of the person who had preferred them. He thought it right to defend the Company against the accusation of mal-administration of its affairs in North America, because, so far as his information extended, he believed the Company exercised its powers with great benefit to the Indians, and with great advantage to the cause of civilization and humanity. No doubt the Indians received less for their furs in consequence of the monopoly of trading given to the Company; but, on the other hand, the absence of competition for the goods of the Indians prevented that excessive indulgence in spirit-drinking to which the Indians were so much addicted. At the Red-River Settlement it could not be denied that the condition of the Indians had been greatly ameliorated under the Company's administration. Against the evidence of Colonel Crofton on this head he could not set that of the parties whose Petition had been presented by the Noble Lord. The grant to the Company had not yet passed; it was under the consideration of the Privy Council: and if any conditions could be imposed, providing for the performance of those duties which were already imposed upon the Company in the grant, it should be done, and he could not doubt but that the Company would cheerfully accede to them.

After a few words from Lord Monteagle in reply, his Lordship's motion was agreed to.

Since the termination of this discussion, Mr. Hume elicited from Mr. Hawes, that in about three weeks the Privy Council would decide upon this important question, and that Government would, in the meanwhile, attend to any proposition which might be tendered from other parties for aiding in the proposed colonization of the Island.

The extreme length to which the foregoing summary of the debate on this question has extended precludes us from commenting upon the principal features of the case, as we had intended. In our next, however, we shall consider the matter under its various aspects, but most particularly as it may affect the few aboriginal Natives that still inhabit Vancouver's Island.

### ABORIGINAL SLAVERY IN THE SOUTH SEAS.

THE following communication, received from Auckland, will exemplify the treatment to which the Natives of the Islands contiguous to our Colonies are still subjected, in spite of the exertions of friends at home. The facts speak for themselves.

*"Auckland, New Zealand, March 6, 1848.*

"MY DEAR SIR—Having lately returned from the Islands of the South Sea, where I made seven-and-forty voyages during the last year, chiefly among the Tonga Isles and Feejee, in the Brig 'John Wesley,' I think it right to copy from my Journal a passage which exhibits a case so very like slavery, that I am afraid you will not find any other word by which the thing can be correctly expressed.

EXTRACT.

*'Feejee, Nov. 27, 1847.*

'Both the master of the barque "Auckland" and Joshua, a Native Christian Teacher, state the following facts, viz. that two vessels from Sydney had been engaged in obtaining men from islands hereabouts, at two pounds each by the year as wages: they are designed to be shepherds and labourers in New South Wales. It is stated that forty of the Natives of an island called Wea, near New Caledonia, were on board these vessels, and were conveyed to Rotumah, where, not liking what they had met with on board, they jumped overboard and swam to the shore. The Chief was applied to, but in vain, to give them up. He said he would not meddle with the affair: he did not bring them, and would not compel them to go away. The Europeans then resorted to harsh measures, with a view to compel the Chief to send off the escaped Natives. A scuffle took place between the parties, and some were shot on both sides; whereupon the vessels sailed without the Natives from Wea; and, of course, they got none from Rotumah. I have no doubt that these facts are substantially correct: three persons from Rotumah have related the matter to me, all of whom got their information on the spot, and they all agree in the main points. The Anti-Slavery Society should use its influence to obtain full information on the subject, because the Government will not permit a system to grow up which is so deeply degrading to human nature, and so thoroughly anti-Christian and anti-British.